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CORRESPONDENCE

"IN THE EVENING PRAISE THE DAY"

When Schiller in *Wallensteins Tod* (v. 3577, Act V, sc. iv, 60) wrote

Und doch erinnr' ich an den alten Spruch:
Man soll den Tag nicht vor dem Abend loben.

he did not of course know how old the proverb actually was. Nor do we. But several parallels from the Middle Ages have been printed since Schiller's day and it is interesting to collect them and to review certain speculations about their age.

Perhaps the oldest instance—it may possibly be dated in the tenth or eleventh century—is found in the Eddic *Hávamál*, an Old Norse collection of gnomic lore (str. 81):

At kveldi skal dag leyfa, konu es brend es,
mæki es reyndr es, mey es gefin es,
ís es ýfir kómr, ol es drukkít es.

(Praise the day at even, a wife when dead,
a weapon when tried, a maid when married,
ice when 'tis crossed, and ale when 'tis drunk.)¹

Heusler adds a new Icelandic parallel (*Möttulssaga*, 22, 8: at kveldi er dagr lofandi) and remarks that the notion "Be slow to praise" has taken form more than once as a *Priamel*, a rhetorical heaping up of apothegms as in the lines above, once indeed in India. Possibly, he concludes, this Eddic stanza may have been the original *Priamel*, the model for the others, although in the choice of its six members and in the alliterative formulation it is an independent, Old Norse product.

Concerning this particular instance more will be said below, for the present it will be sufficient to note that the first half-line exactly parallels the German proverb and that the same idea is variously expressed in the following epigrams. Somewhat later is the earliest instance of known age, a sententious remark in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*, which was composed in the last quarter of the twelfth century. Professor Hinton, who has dated the various fragments of the work, assigns the portion in which the proverb occurs to the year 1182. Map says:

¹ Olive Bray, *The Elder or Poetic Edda*, London, 1908, p. 83. Dietrich ("Zu *Hávamál*," *Zs. f. deutsches Altertum*, III [1843], 414) cites medieval analogues to the substance of these admonitions, but none is closely parallel to the first of them. Cf. "þat skal leyfa sem liðit er,"—Jónsson, *Arkiv for nordisk filologi*, xxx (1914), 108, No. 246. The latest study of the *Hávamál* is Heusler, "Sprichwörter in den eddischen Sittengedichten," *Zs. des Vereins f. Volkskunde*, xxv (1915), 108-115 and xxvi (1916), 42-47, see especially pp. 42-43.

Sed vero laus in fine canitur, et uespere laudatur dies.²

Apparently about contemporary with the admonition of the Archdeacon of Oxford are certain Latin proverbs preserved in a manuscript of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Lat. 6765, saec. xii), which are as follows:

Que debetur ei, laus vespere danda diei.
Vespere detur ei, si laus est danda diei.
Vespere laudetur, si pulchra dies perhibetur.³

It also occurs in the vernacular about the same time, being particularly popular in medieval French, e. g.,

Au vespre loue len le iour.⁴

Schepp, who collects eleven more variations on the theme, concludes that the original form of the proverb in Old French was

Al vespre loë en le jor e al matin son hoste.⁵

The second injunction appears to be peculiar to the French. The only Latin (or other) example I have noted with this conclusion, viz.,

Uespere laudatur lux, hospes mane probatur

is from the *Proverbia Rusticorum*, a collection of proverbs current in northern France in the thirteenth century and the first collection to contain the vernacular along with the Latin for school purposes.⁶ No German occurrence of the proverb seems to be reported earlier than the manuscript of the *Schwabacher Sprüche*, which is assigned by its editor to middle Germany at the end of the fourteenth century. In that collection, made by an ecclesiastic to serve as a basis for sermons, the proverb appears as

Ein guten tag sol man auff den obent loben.⁷

² Dist. II, cap. xvi (ed. Wright, p. 85; ed. James, p. 80, ll. 24-25). Professor Hinton's article is "Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*: Its Plan and Composition," *Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Ass.*, xxxii (1917), 123.

³ J. Werner, *Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sinnsprüche des Mittelalters*, Heidelberg, 1912, pp. 74 (Q 6), 99 (V 25 and 26). See also Seiler, *Zs. f. deutsche Philologie*, xlv (1913), 291. There are important additions to Werner in Slijper, *Tijdschrift*, xxxii (1913), 261 ff. and Weymann, *Münchener Museum*, II (1914), 117-45; but these I have not seen.

⁴ Högberg, "Zwei altfranzösische Sprichwörtersammlungen in der Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Uppsala," *Zs. f. frz. Sprache und Litteratur*, xlv (1919), 469, No. 8.

⁵ *Altfranzösische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen aus den höfischen Kunstepen . . . und aus einigen didaktischen Dichtungen*, Greifswald Diss., 1905, pp. 41-42. Paul Meyer (*Romania*, xxxi [1902], 476) cites an example without giving source or date, but it is the same as Schepp's fourth variant.

⁶ Müllenhoff and Scherer, *Denkmäler*², II (1892), 133 and 141.

⁷ The collection was first published by Hofmann (*Sitzungsberichte der kgl. bairischen akad. der wiss.*, II [1870], 25-38), and is reprinted with

A century and a half later (1550) it runs

Guoten tac man zabende loben sol.⁸

In both of these instances the employment of the auxiliary *sol* will later be seen to be significant. Two of the three manuscripts of the Middle English *Proverbs of Hendyng*, a poem in which each stanza concludes with a gnomic phrase, contain our proverb. In one version it reads:

At eve man scal þe dai heri.⁹

This instance is particularly interesting because the bitter and worldly *Proverbs of Hendyng* are supposed to contain rather more of the native English paroemiological lore than do such international collections as *Adrian and Ritheus*, the *Disticha Catonis*, or *Salomon and Marcolf* (although the mysterious *Hendyng* purports to be the son of Marcolf). Moreover, it will be noticed that the English proverb follows the model of the *seal*-gnomes of the Exeter and Cotton MSS., which represent an ancient Germanic manner of phrasing a proverb. Although the similarity in this regard between the Old Norse and the Middle English forms is striking it does not imply borrowing, but rather employment of the same convention.—Note also the modern Danish

En god Dag skal man rose om Aftenen,

which follows the old model.¹⁰—Beyond the Middle Ages I have not sought to trace the proverb, it is no doubt to be found in the standard collections.¹¹

It has already been said that the proverb in some of its forms (English, German, and Scandinavian) follows an old rhetorical

useful notes by Seiler, *Zs. f. deutsche Philologie*, XLVII (1918), 243 ff., see particularly p. 254, No. 131. Seiler's comparison of "Nescis, quid vesper serus vehat" (Varro ap. Gellius, 13. 11. 1) and "Quid vesper ferat, incertum est" (Liv. 45. 8. 6) does not seem to fit exactly the idea behind the proverb.

⁸ *Lawin* (cited by Heusler from Zingerle, *Die deutschen Sprichwörter im Mittelalter*, p. 145).

⁹ Varnhagen, *Anglia*, IV (1881), 183, str. 34, cf. p. 197, str. 33: At even me shal preisen þe feire dai. Kneuer (*Die Sprichwörter Hendyngs*, Diss., Leipzig, 1901) misunderstands the phrase entirely, since he cites as parallel: "Tieus rit au main ki au soir pleure." Cf. Meyer, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ H. G. Bohn, *Polyglot of Foreign Proverbs*, 1881, p. 365; cf. p. 168, "Schönen Tag soll man loben, wenn Nacht ist."

¹¹ E. g., Düringsfeld, *Das Sprichwort als Kosmopolit*, I, 85; Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Sprichwörter der germanischen und romanischen Völker*, II, no. 54; W. C. Hazlitt, *English Proverbs*, London, 1907, p. 363, "Praise day at night and life at the end," (from Herbert, *Outlandish Proverbs*, 1640), etc. It does not seem to be classical in this particular form, although the notion was familiar enough to the Greeks and Romans (dicique beatus Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet—Ov. *Met.* 3. 136; ὅρα τέλος μακροῦ βίου—Herod. 1. 32), cf. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Leipzig, 1890, p. 369, "vesper."

type. And the similarity of the Old Norse stanza to certain Finnish metrical proverbs (*kanteletar*) has led to an interesting but probably fruitless discussion. The Finnish verses as translated by Euling run as follows:

Rühm dein neues Ross erst morgen,
Deine Frau im zweiten Jahre,
Erst im dritten deinen Schwager,
Und dich selber nie im Leben

and

Rühm dein Ross nicht vor dem Morgen,
Nicht den Sohn, bevor er Mann ist,
Nicht die Tochter vor der Ehe,
Und dich selbst nie vor dem Tode.¹²

He remarks that these stanzas are artistically constructed in that they exhibit a climactic arrangement, which does not appear in the Old Norse. Richard M. Meyer (*Die altgermanische Poesie*, pp. 434, 517) asserts that they were borrowed by the Finns from the Germanic races with which they were in contact during the first centuries of the Christian Era. But Euling, more cautiously and no doubt more correctly, sees only a community of motive, and not borrowing.¹³ And Comparetti (cited by Euling) declares that the time of the contact cannot be determined.

Whatever the possibilities of borrowing may be and whatever the chance that a bit of indogermanic proverbial wisdom which has been transmitted through the ages is before us, it is clear that Schiller spoke more wisely than he could have known in saying "den alten Spruch."

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GEORGE TICKNOR ON CHATEAUBRIAND

To those following the discussion of Chateaubriand and the American journey, the following passages from *The Life, Letters and Journal of George Ticknor* (London, 1876) will be of interest. Under date of May 28, 1817, Ticknor, who was a traveler in Paris, writes:

"I dined to-day again at Mad. de Staël's. There were few persons there, but she likes to have somebody every day, for society is necessary to her. To-day, however, she was less well, and saw none of us. At another time I should have regretted this; but to-day I should have been sorry to have left the party for any reason, since, beside the Duc de Laval, and M. Barante, whom I already knew, there were Chateaubriand and Mad. Recamier, two persons whom I was as curious to see as any two persons in France whom I had not yet met. . . .

¹² *Germanistische Abhandlungen*, xxv, *Das Priamel bis Hans Rosenplüt*, p. 125.

¹³ He cites a number of parallels, which need not be repeated here since they have in common merely the general notion of withholding praise until worth has been demonstrated.